



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2013**

**Grade 7  
Reading**

# Reading

There was enough food for only three days, so they clearly did not want to encourage a prolonged stay.

- 1 What does the word prolonged mean as it is used in the box?
- A. barren
  - B. lengthy
  - C. productive
  - D. reasonable

- 2 The root *var* in the words various and variety means
- A. highest.
  - B. primitive.
  - C. different.
  - D. oldest.

*In this folktale, the bat claims to be either a bird or a rat whenever it suits him best. Read the folktale. Then answer the questions that follow.*

## **Why Bats Fly at Night** **Inspired by a Tale from Laos** *Frederick Y. Lagbao*

For a long time the bat enjoyed his double identity. This allowed him to get the best of both worlds. If the birds were taking a vacation, he'd fly south with them. If the rats planned a feast, he'd dine on their food.

Then one day the great King Lam called a meeting of all creatures in his kingdom. He announced that a bridge needed to be built over the ocean from India to the island of Lanka. Lam and his army were at war with the demon king of Lanka. The bridge would help Lam's army attack the enemy. Every creature in the land was expected to help in the construction.

Immediately after the order, the captain of the birds called his winged friends together. "We can't let our king down," commanded the captain. "We must work hard to construct this bridge. Our job will be to bring twigs and grass for the spiders to weave into rope. Each of us must help."

With that, all the birds flew off to begin their task. But the bat sat lazily by a tree. He was peacefully munching on seeds when the captain of the birds saw him there.

The captain said gruffly, "Why are you not gathering twigs and grass? You will join the rest of the birds to help our valiant king."

The bat shook his head. "Sorry captain, can't do it."

"What do you mean, you can't do it?"

"Well, I've been meaning to tell you that I'm not really a bird."

The captain of the birds stared at him. "What do you mean?" he said. "You can fly, can't you? You have always said that any animal that flies as well as you must be a bird."

"But how many birds do you know who have

teeth like mine?" he said, opening his mouth. "Or fur like mine?" he said, holding out his arm. "Tell me, how many birds do you know who can run along the ground as nimbly and boldly as I can?" Without waiting for a reply, he turned over to sun his stomach.

The captain of the birds was bewildered. He didn't know how to answer the bat's arguments. On the one hand, if only birds can fly, then anything that flies must be a bird. On the other hand, if no bird has teeth and fur, then anything with teeth and fur must not be a bird. It was all so confusing! Without saying another word, the captain flew away.

**12** Just as the captain of the birds flew away, the captain of the rats was leading his busy rat battalion past. The captain yelled at the bat. "Maybe you haven't heard, but King Lam needs our help. Every rat will be collecting stones for the bridge."

**13** The bat pretended to be asleep as the rat continued. "You will join the glorious rat battalion that will help King Lam build his bridge. History will record that we rats did more to ensure Lam's victory than all the other animals put together."

The bat paused for a moment, opened one eye, then the other, and said, "Sorry, captain, but I can't join your rat brigade."

"Why not?" asked the captain in surprise.

"I've been waiting for the right moment to break this to you. You see, I'm not really a rat. Therefore, I don't deserve your glory."

"Not a rat? How can that be? You have teeth, don't you?"

"That's right," replied the bat. "Nice, sharp ones," he said, touching the point of each tooth.

"You have fur, don't you?" asked the captain.

“That’s right, the furriest,” replied the bat as he stroked his hair.

“You can run just like the other rats, can’t you?”

“That’s right, even faster,” said the bat, with a big yawn.

“You have all the characteristics of a rat. You are obviously a rat,” the captain declared.

“That’s where you’re wrong. How many rats do you know who can fly?” asked the bat.

The captain of the rats was silent. He couldn’t think of a single rat who could fly. “Well,” he said at last, “I guess you don’t fit in with us rats after all. How unlucky for you!”

As soon as the captain of the rats was out of earshot, the bat had a good laugh. “What fools,” he thought. “There will be no bridge-building for me.” With that taken care of, he sat down to have a snack and take a nap.

The captain of the birds and the captain of the rats told Lam of the bat’s refusal to help. The news made the king furious!

“How dare he refuse!” Lam thundered. “Every other creature in the land is fulfilling its duty to the king. And this bat escapes by confusing us with aliases? This will not go unpunished.”

The king quickly scribbled an official note and handed it back to the captains. “Gather every creature of the forest and read this decree. And I

mean *every* creature.”

A special meeting was called, and all anxiously awaited the message. Only for very special reasons did the king call everyone together. “Please read this, clever monkey,” said the captains.

The monkey unrolled the note and read:

“I, King Lam, do decree that from this day on, the bat will follow these three rules. Rule number one, the bat is forbidden to fly in the daytime or set foot on the land. He can no longer fly with the birds or run with the rats. Rule number two, since he did not want to be a member of a group, the bat must forever live apart from other animals. Rule number three, since he always turned his stories upside down, depending on whom he was talking to, he must sleep upside down from now on.”

All heads turned to see how the bat would respond. In shame, he hung his head and flew away. It was the last time the bat was seen in daylight.

That is why bats fly only at night and sleep by day. That is why they keep to themselves and never mix with the other animals. That is why they sleep upside down in trees, cliffs, and caves. Today, no one would ever mistake a bat for a bird or a rat.

- 3 What does King Lam order the animals to do for him?
- A. build a direct way to reach Lanka
  - B. hold a special meeting to show loyalty
  - C. find a creature that is like a bird and a rat
  - D. spy on the king of Lanka to discover his plan

- 4 In paragraph 12, the word battalion means
- A. equipment.
  - B. troop.
  - C. system.
  - D. friend.

- 5 In paragraph 13, how does the captain of the rats try to persuade the bat?
- A. The captain says that the bat will have little work to do.
  - B. The captain suggests that the bat will be honored as a hero.
  - C. The captain claims that King Lam will offer the bat riches.
  - D. The captain explains that the bat will have a home in Lanka.

- 6 The captains accept the bat's explanations because they are
- A. good friends of the king.
  - B. not as clever as the bat.
  - C. not serious about their work.
  - D. weaker leaders than the king.

- 7 Explain why King Lam imposes the three rules on the bat. Use details from the folktale to support your answer.

8 A synonym for the word decree is

- A. plan.
- B. wish.
- C. idea.
- D. order.

9 Which word **best** describes the bat in the folktale?

- A. moral
- B. selfish
- C. ambitious
- D. distressed

10 According to the folktale, why do bats fly only at night?

- A. to protect themselves from other animals
- B. to show their loyalty to the king
- C. to fulfill the penalty set by the king
- D. to show the proper way to treat other animals

11 What is the **main** theme of the folktale?

- A. Being clever can help create a life of ease.
- B. There are consequences for one's actions.
- C. Anything can be accomplished through teamwork.
- D. Friends are always available no matter what the situation.

12 Explain whether the bat deserves the king's punishments. Use details from the folktale to support your answer.

# Acknowledgments

The New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine Departments of Education wish to acknowledge and credit the following authors and publishers for use of their work in the reading portion of the *New England Common Assessment Program*—2013.

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